

Jurors in Rewald Case Describe Deliberations Leading to Verdict

By Charles Memminger
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Sitting as a juror through a trial like the 11-week Ronald Rewald case was "sort of like owning a convertible," jury foreman Walter Johnson Jr. said yesterday.

"Everybody should do it once, but once is enough," Johnson said.

The five-woman and seven-man jury needed only 2½ days to reach a verdict on the 98 counts facing Rewald. The jurors interviewed as they left federal court yesterday indicated that once they discounted Rewald's claim of substantial CIA involvement in his company, the deliberations went quickly.

"First we decided all the hard problems," said juror Brian Walczak. "Once we solved them, we just went through the charges."

A vote after the first hour of discussions on Thursday afternoon showed about seven jurors in favor of conviction and the rest undecided, according to Walczak.

Government attorneys specu-

lated on Friday that the jury might be moving quickly because it came back to court that afternoon with questions about counts in the 80s and 90s.

"We worked through generally from beginning to end," said Johnson, a charterboat skipper and former military judge. "Those we wanted more discussion on we skipped and came back and picked up later."

THERE WAS substantial discussion on the perjury charges, related to Rewald's claim that the CIA set up and ran his company and that the CIA had supplied him with fake Marquette University diplomas as part of his alleged "cover."

"We looked at it (the CIA defense) from all angles and decided to discredit most of it," Johnson said. "There was no evidence to support it."

"As far as the record showed, it (the CIA) was a very light connection," said Edison Ubaldo.

"The CIA connection would have helped him for the perjury (counts), but I don't think it matters in any of the other

charges," Walczak said.

He said jurors thought the CIA connection to Rewald was "bigger than the government was trying to make it but smaller than the defense tried to make it."

Johnson said he believed the three CIA field-office chiefs who testified during the trial that Rewald provided only light cover and telephone "backstopping" for the agency.

"There might have been one or two points they hedged on," Johnson said. "But the overall impression I got was that they told the truth."

HE SAID HE didn't believe there was any evidence to support Rewald's claim that his company was in the middle of a clandestine \$10 million military-arms deal at the time of the collapse.

"It never really came up," Johnson said. "It kept being alluded to, there was never any evidence brought out to confirm or deny the arms deal."

Johnson said he also was not affected by the fact that Rewald did not take the stand.

"Didn't make no particular difference to me," he said.

As for the four counts on which Rewald was acquitted, Walczak explained: "They made the mistake of bringing those people (the four investor witnesses) in at the beginning of the trial and we couldn't even remember if they showed up."